[177] Cloth garments have certainly been used only recently among 291 the Tuareg; they used to wear leather clothing. A few Ahaggar 174 Iklan still wear these knee-length blouses with fringes over the chest, sides, and sleeves. Evidences of these leather clothes are still to be found among captives from the Sudan and the Timbuktu region. They wear skirts tight at the waist, dyed half red and half yellow, and decorated with multicolored fringes. In Aïr little girls still wear /270/ a kind of small leather apron, and little boys, little leather trousers.

These seem to be the ancestral clothes of the Tuareg. The description of the dress of Libyan women which Herodotus has given us corresponds in all details to the leather dress used in the Timbuktu region, and some rock drawings of the Tassili are the very image of the small leather tunic of the Koudia Iklan.

● 832 Ornaments. Jewelry. -- The coquetry of the Ahaggar Tuareg is a most remarkable thing and quite unexpected among people who live under such primitive conditions and whose natural instincts must lead them first of all toward the spirit of self-preservation and material preoccupations. However, it reflects their rather superficial [181] life, their light mores, and that pleasurable existence which the nobles intend to lead.

And so the Tuareg sacrifice everything to their coquetry, depriving themselves of food and parting with some of their goods in order to procure lustrous clothes, multicolored ribbons to set off the brilliancy of their coiffure, and amulet boxes which are carried more for aesthetic than religious reasons.

301 Women conform to the same faults and know no rest until they 832 have a certain number of jewels with which to adorn themselves.

For men, adornment consists of a few jewels, especially cases for amulets. As regards jewelry, they wear only one or two silver rings on their fingers, a heavy and coarse kind of ring, either plain or slightly twisted. In addition they wear a stone ring above the elbow.

meal, which is taken very late, and more rarely after the meal if it is to entertain a stranger. Everyone sits in a circle. Each person takes a place in the order of his arrival, in such a way as to alternate men and women. When everyone has arrived, they elect a male president and a female president, whose job is to see that the usages and customs of the ahal are respected and, as a joke, /289/ to inflict forfeits on those who bring on themselves the recriminations of the others. Sometimes only a female president is elected, but never a male president alone.

The presence of several girls in a camp is often sufficient cause for organizing an ahal mixed with asri. The young men come from neighboring camps, always dressed in their dressy clothes. Some of them sometimes come hundreds of kilometers to attend a meeting where they know they will find pretty girls and pleasant distraction. Then one of those present plays the violin. The sourish, plaintive, monotonous sounds which come out of it are quite in harmony with the wild setting made by nature and man. The men accentuate the rhythm by singing "ho ho" on the beat and finally by a hummed accompaniment. And everyone jokes and tells broad stories, for the poetic part is often of a very doubtful quality, if not made up of more or less vulgar repartee.

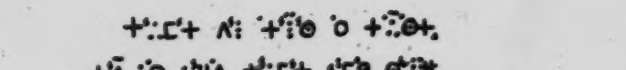
Then the violin is silent, and laughter bursts out on all sides. Men and women make very free contacts and rub noses which is the peculiar form of the Tuareg kiss. These meetings end very late at night, and everyone returns to his camp, not, however, without having made an appointment by a special language of hand gestures to finish these amorous love feasts in a more intimate way.

The mores of the girls are indeed very licentious, so much so that Father de Foucault stated that the word "virginity" did not exit in Tamashek. (1) "There is no question of keeping the girl

1. Dr. Vermale, Au Sahara pendant la guerre européenne /In the Sahara During the European War/, p. 172.

3: Holiday J-5 (ca. 1955) 1956 MS25 Tuareg MS25
Hoggar

eyes are probably descended from the Vandals who invaded north Africa some 300 years earlier. Legend, though not springing from the Tuareg themselves, suggests they grew out of a lost band of Crusaders that wandered into the desert after the Holy wars of the middle ages: a legend that draws attention to the Tuareg's use of chain mail and long two-handed swords and to his stature and Aryan features. The language of the Tuareg is called Tamahaq; their speech soft and guttural. In its written form, Tifinar, the alphabet is possibly that of the ancient Libyans. The hieroglyphics are utterly unlike Arabic and the construction of the alphabet is consonantal, a feature which makes the task of translation difficult. For many years now Dr. Wakefield, an Englishwoman, has been living in Tamanrasset making a study of Tamahaq and translating the Bible. It is already 8 years ago that the National Bible Society of Scotland published the Book of Ruth for missionary work among the Tuareg based on Dr. Wakefield's studies.



The Bible in Tamahaq

(*Ruth. Ch. 2, Verse 17*)

"So she gleaned in the field until evening, and when she beat out what she had gleaned, it was about an ephah of barley."

Again, the influence of such work is too limited at present to be a cogent factor. From the standpoint of religion the Tuareg reveal a strange mixture of paganism and lip-service to Islam. Literally, the word Tuareg—or, in its purer form Twarek—means "abandoned", i.e., the abandoned of God. To some extent the limits of the Tuareg domain are fixed by his superstitions; which have peopled areas like the Plateau du Tademait, north of In Salah and the mountains of Emmid-Din to the east of the Ahaggar with ghosts and djinns. The Tuareg are, above everything, religious opportunists; in that, like all superstitious people, they believe what suits them best. Unlike most other social groups they do not seem to have synthetised their beliefs or emotions into a set of religious observance that is a collective interest of the community. Marriage and divorce exist but, sexually, the tribe is a-moral and a feature of the social structure of the group is the "ahal", a love-feast at which the men serenade their chosen lovers, praising their beauty in terms of the moon, a flower or with images equally poetic and universal.

Tuareg society is matriarchal: another distinctive feature that sets them apart from the Arab world. Although authority appears to be invested in the male, in so far as tribal groups are administered by the Amenokal, or king, it is through the women that heredity is determined. The child of a Targui begotten by a woman outside the tribe will not be Tuareg; but a Targuia (Tuareg woman) who has a child by a slave, for instance, claims for the offspring direct Tuareg descent, though not necessarily in the same social circle. There are, in fact, several social strata within Tuareg society that have arisen through the centuries as a result of raiding for slaves; and also from the involved relationship between slaves and slaves, and masters and slaves since the children of some are free, while others are not; and the children of the second generation of some are free. These last are called "Hartanis", meaning literally, "free in the second generation (from "Harr"—free, "Thani"—second). The nobility of the tribe are known as "Kel" and the men can be distinguished by the dark blue veil. The serfs, although Tuareg by birth, wear a white veil, while the Hartanis, who are mostly of negroid descent, go unveiled.

Thus it is that a great many influences have combined to build up the tribe and, consequently, it is not surprising to find in their music certain similar incongruities.

As to the girl, a celebration is held as soon as she reaches 881
the age of puberty, that is to say, at the start of her menses,
in Tamashek /6/ "ba-n-amoud" ⵎⵓⵔⵉ (literally,
"cutting of prayer," since during her indisposition the woman [841]
is in a state of impurity and cannot pray). The young girl is [291]
dressed in her prettiest clothes, and on her head is placed a
black veil, "ikerhi" ⵉⴽⴻⵔⵀⵉ , which falls on either side of
her face without hiding it. She also never leaves it off.

If her parents are well-to-do, she will learn to play the 983
amz'ad ⵎⵣⴰⴷ , an instrument which has an important [556]
place in Tuareg life. It is a kind of violin with a single string 534
whose box is made of a large "kabouia," or a dried and
scooped-out gourd, covered with a stretched hide and pierced
with two holes, which is provided with a handle. The string
is made of horsehair, "az'iou" ⴰⵣⵉⵓ , as are the strings
of the bow, "tadjeth'é" ⵜⴰⵊⵜⵜⴻ , made of a stick bent into
an arc.

It is chiefly an instrument to accompany singing. The [533]
woman slides her fingers over the string without pressing,
while working the bow; she prolongs the final phrases, which
are drawn out.

If a young girl knows how to play, she may shine at the [832]
musical gatherings, where she will be courted.

Chapter IV

Musical Gatherings

A young man and a young girl often go to meet together, 533
and this occurs especially in those gatherings which, to be 584
accurate, we will if you permit call "musical gatherings," and 832
which the Tuareg call "ahal" ⵜⴰⵀⴰⵍ , plural "ihallen" ⵉⵀⴰⵍⵍⴻⵏ

/7/

The ahal takes place very often. All that is needed is for 533
a group of men and women to be gathered together in a camp. 584
Often a man comes from a considerable distance to court the 832
girl of his choice. When the year is good, that is to say, when [361]
the rains have brought the pastures to life and the camels are giving much milk, several camps are set up close to each other, and the ahal begins right after sunset.

The men of the camps gather with those who have come especially because some woman attracts them. The women bring their "imz'aden" violins. All those attend the ahal who [602]
are not afraid to be in the presence of one of their relatives to whom they owe respect, such as a father, uncle, older brother, etc. Young girls, married women, divorcées or widows, all attend the ahal.

[361]

Dautheville

Tuareg Troup at Amr'a (Black Tifedest)

Gallantry, "asri" ⵄⵙⵔⵉ , is required, and jealousy [577]
strictly prohibited. Besides, this latter feeling is unknown [626]
among the Tuareg, and if one of them should think of showing it, he would be booed and everyone would make fun of him.

When a Tuareg arrives at the ahal near a woman whom he wishes to court, he approaches her with his veil carefully lowered and does not greet her with the usual "essalamou r'

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laïkoum" (May the greeting be on you!). Silently he holds his hand out to the woman in the Tuareg manner (that is to say, holding his hand /8/ out open flat and sliding it over the open hand of the woman), and he sits down, saying: "iselane" (What news?). If the woman answers: "elouane" (There is a *lot*), he begins to pay his court. The Tuareg are not very religious, and it sometimes happens that the woman asks such questions as: "Whom do you love more, God or me?"

The songs begin, and the imz'aden play the accompaniment. The men sing in snatches lines that they have composed on the charms of the ladies of their dreams, the feats that they have done, the raids in which they have taken part, or else satires on their enemies. The women extol courage. In general, a noble woman does not sing, but only plays the amz'ad.

There are three musical rhythms:

The "seyenine" rhythm, lively and quite fast, used among the Kel R'ela and the Taïtoq.

The "ahinena" rhythm, slow and drawn out like a chant, used especially among the Kel R'ela.

The "asaher'" rhythm, used among the Tuareg of the Azdjer /Azjer/ confederation.

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Then there are simple games. The women elect a "sultana, "-or queen; the men a "sultan, " or king, who will inflict the punishments incurred and will set the fines to be paid. It is a context of wits. A man must be able to answer the questions asked. If, for example, to this question: "Whom do you like better, this one or that one?, " he answers: "I prefer this one, " he would be booed, would incur a punishment or pay a fine, and the woman who is preferred would be ridiculed by her companions, for one must not show preference openly but must answer, "I like them both. "

Another kind of question: "What would you do if you found yourself in the following situation: /9/

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"Tamott tekness
"Ehere iouof
"Ta'hett ter'tess
"Tir'irt touoss"

which means:

The woman who argues.
Flocks that scatter.
The she-ass that breaks her tether.
The pot that tips over.

In a joking way, to be a real wit, the man could answer: "If I should find myself in this situation, I would first gather the flock, I would re-tether the ass, I would put the pot back on the fire, and only then would I pay attention to the woman, " and there would be a chorus of indignant protests.

The woman makes it a point of honor to have as many admirers as possible. This is a proof that she is pretty and will not have trouble in getting married. 584 832

The ahal, begun after sunset, lasts quite late into the night, and the pale light that is shed by the stars allows shamelessness to have free rein. Although the married women joke and take part in the games, they behave themselves comparatively well. The others, however, may sit on the knees of their admirers. They kiss, but in a special way. Since the man must never uncover his mouth, he lowers his veil under his nose, and he piously smells the nose! of his loved one, who herself may kiss him. Even intimate handling (proh pudor! /oh, shame/) is allowed, which is never seen among the Arabs. 533 584 832

During these gatherings, when the amz'ad is played, it is listened to with great pleasure. This instrument has a way of exciting /10/ the Tuareg, who utter "Ouh! ouh!" as a sign of pleasure. They have even made a verb of it: isouhouh. [201]

But now is the time when the camels come from the pasture. They must be milked: that is the az'ouz'edj ⵣ'ⵉ## (from ez'edj ⵣ'ⵉ# , to milk). The women get up, and those present are given milk to drink. They will have to disperse. [272]

The men leave, the women go back into the tents, but the fortunate ones who have succeeded by means of assiduous courtship to touch the heart of their love, will soon come back secretly or will go to the place which has been appointed for them. Let us draw a veil!... 832 836

One might wonder what can become of the virtue of young girls with such customs. Almost always it has gone up in the air. But a Tuareg will not pay attention to this detail when it is a matter of getting married. He knows with what to be content: he has often profited by it. It is all the same to him. 585 836

The ahal is one of the reasons for late marriages among the Tuareg. Marriage requires expenditures upon which one does not decide until one has been able to acquire a little means, and that is why it is not unusual among the Tuareg to see men marry at the age of forty. With all he finds to entertain him, the Tuareg does not feel the need to get married. This does not mean that many do not marry around twenty-five, but in general a man marries quite late. 582 836

Farther on, in the little collection of songs, will appear the qualities which a man must have in order to succeed at the ahal, as well as the kind of songs which are sung there. /Not translated./ /11/ 000

Chapter V

The Role of the Woman in Tuareg Society

At every step one sees the influence of the woman in Tuareg society. In Tuareg history, the inheritance, the life, the thought, and the behavior, everywhere her influence is felt. 562

In the matter of history, it is from her that the Tuareg says he is descended. Thus the nobles of the Ahaggar will tell 173 562

7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

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Fig. 3. Unveiled vassal Tuareg. Ahaggar, the *Ikkn-en-tewsit* tribe.

Fig. 4. Unveiled vassal Tuareg. Tasilé-n-Ajjer.

142 with the French. I have myself never seen a genuine blond Tuareg, but I have met a few albinos though
144 albinism seems to be rare. These observations agree with those of Lhote (1955a, p. 163). All the Tuareg
[143] I have seen had curly or straight black hair, and dark brown or almost black eyes. Many individuals had fairly broad faces with protuding cheeks which gave them superficially a mongoloid appearance,
142 while others had features more like Mediterranean Europeans. In literature the Tuareg are generally described as very tall people. I did not myself carry out anthropological measurements, but will not hesitate to state that in my opinion a great many Tuareg are far from big. Very many adult men in the groups I have visited were considerably shorter than myself (1.73 m). Tuareg men are generally dry
[147] and meagre, bearing the stamp of their roaming life in the desert. Their most outstanding quality is
[167] that of endurance and contempt of hunger and hardship. The appearance of Tuareg women is often quite different – they tend to grow fat. This is probably to some extent due to the fact that married
826 women spend most of their life in the tents and get little physical exercise. But fatness is also a sign
832 of feminine beauty, and some women make a great effort to grow fat by drinking milk or eating
[261] certain fattening plants (cf. p. 177, 178). According to some Tuareg fat women symbolize wealth – large flocks and herds, and much milk – but many Tuareg also say that they prefer fat women because they

7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

826 832 get more sexual satisfaction from intercourse with them. "A fat woman is like a woman who has never known a man", they say. Some women are steatopygous though never to the same extent as women among the Bushmen and the Hottentot. Very comprehensive studies of Tuareg physical anthropology are lacking. Readers are referred to the chapter written by Lhote who has also published a brief bibliography of studies on this subject (Lhote 1955a, p. 158–170, 433), and to the recent and valuable publication by Briggs (Briggs 1958, p. 163 ff., 183 ff.).

142 114

291 The custom of Tuareg face veiling has attracted the curiosity of many scholars and travellers. Much has been written about the fact that Tuareg men wear a veil (*tagulmust* in Ahaggar, *tagulmust* in Ayr) while their women are unveiled in contrast to Arab custom. There have been given various explanations of the origin of the custom of Tuareg face veiling. Most authors refer it to hygienic conditions: the veil protects the face from sand and dust, and it prevents mouth, nose, and throat from drying up in hot weather. The fact is that the veil has the latter function, and Arab bedouins of the Sahara will also frequently veil their faces during journeys in the hot season. But the hygienic explanation is definitely not the reason why the Tuareg also veil themselves in many situations where face veiling is unpractical and unpleasant. Another explanation of the custom of face veiling is that the veil may perhaps have certain religious or magic functions. This explanation is apparently also insufficient. A [254] few Tuareg have claimed that the veil may yield protection from persons having an "evil eye" or an "evil mouth" – beliefs known in Ahaggar as *tehot*, in Ayr as *tugarchet*. But as I have stated elsewhere (Nicolaisen 1957a, p. 112; 1961, p. 114) the proper function of face veiling seems to be a social one. Many Tuareg will leave their face uncovered in family camps or on journeys, but they will always cover mouth, nose, and brow in the presence of foreigners (particularly foreign women) and in the presence of their parents-in-law (particularly their mothers-in-law). Towards such persons it is also considered very indecent to show one's legs. It has been overlooked by most authors that Tuareg women wear a head-cloth (*ékerhey* in Ahaggar, *adalil* in Ayr), which is similar to the veil worn by men in form and shape. The headcloth and the veil are properly made from Sudanese indigo cotton, and both the veil and the headcloth are therefore also known as *alechchu*. It is true that Tuareg women [609] [606] do not veil their face by means of this headcloth in the same way as do the men. But in the presence of foreigners (particularly foreign men) and towards fathers-in-law the women will draw their headcloth over their mouth (cf. Fig. 297a). The man's veil and the woman's headcloth have identical social functions which is also proved by the fact that young men and women adopt veil or headcloth at initiation (Ahaggar), or at marriage (Ayr). Both the veil and the headcloth are worn by people of various black-skinned castes of Tuareg country but the custom of face veiling seems to be more strictly observed among the true Tuareg.

291 576 [609] [606]

181 The custom of face veiling is one characteristic of all Tuareg. Another quality peculiar to all Tuareg, and particularly to those of the noble class, is their "snobbishness" as it is frequently called by many Frenchmen living at Tamanrasset and Agadez. There are a great many things a Tuareg cannot do, and there are many situations in which he will have to act in a very special way if he is to be regarded as a man worthy of respect and prestige. Tuareg attitudes to etiquette are not easily described in words. Gait, gestures, and postures are all intended to express qualities of elegance, arrogance, refinement, and strength. Vanity with regard to dress and ornaments is another characteristic of all true Tuareg.

7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

Fig. 82a. Tuareg performing the ceremonial camel-ride on the first wedding day. The women stand in the shade of the *aferag* acacia and sing and drum while the men ride around them two by two. Southern Ayr, *Iguwilen*.

Boys and girls may play together, but there is a tendency for them to separate in their games. Boys' games centre round camels, while the games of girls centre round the family life of the tent and certain domestic tasks. But though camels are never tended by women, girls also make camel figures from cotton stuffed with hay, though they do not make figures to represent goats and donkeys which among nomads are connected with women and tended by them. The emphasis on camels in girl's games is due to the fact that camels have important functions in social life as described briefly below.

Tuareg initiation consists in the adoption of the veil by young men, and a similar piece of cotton used as a head-cloth by young women. The veil is adopted by men when 16–18 years old, the head-cloth by women somewhat earlier shortly after the first menstruation, or at marriage. At initiation the young man is presented with a sword, and if he does not already possess a riding camel with a saddle it will be given him on this occasion by his father, perhaps by his mother's brother. The young man is now a warrior and a camel man, and he will take part in nightly gatherings of young people of both sexes to sing and make music. These nightly gatherings are very often followed by love-making, and the riding camel and the ability of the young man as a rider play a great part for his success in love. The beauty of the riding camel, its saddle gear, and the way it is ridden are all to some extent considered qualities of the rider. Thus when women at nightly gatherings praise young men in their songs they will also praise the riding camels. And when a girl likes a young man she will present him with coloured skin bags, reins, embroidered saddle cloths, and similar objects to be used as ornaments for his riding camel.

In a ceremonial ride termed *ihgan* (*ihgan* in Ayr), which is performed at weddings and certain other feasts, the young men have a particular opportunity to display the beauty of their camels and their own ability as riders. The ride takes place not far from the wedding tent on a level sandy place where the women gather to sing and drum, while the men dressed in their finest clothes ride their ornamented camels to and fro past the women, who praise the beautiful camels and the skilled riders by their songs, their music, and by shrill cheers. In this ceremonial ride the emphasize is not so much on such

7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

catching wild donkeys in the mountains around the valley of Anu Mekkeren. The method is not used for proper game animals.

(7) A pulling and a throwing snare are both known as *tuṛunt*. They are said not to be used for hunting, though commonly employed to catch wild donkeys and domestic animals which have gone astray; cf. p. 108 f.

(8) The spiked wheel-trap (*tawchit*) provided with a noosed rope (*tuṛunt*) attached to a stick. This is used for gazelle and bigger game animals in isolated places rarely visited by representatives of the administration. According to Buchanan, the spiked wheel-trap is used for ostriches in the plains south of Ayr (Buchanan 1921, p. 117 ff.). Large traps of this type are also used for giraffe by certain hunters within the Cercle d'Agadez (Brouin 1950, p. 453).

(9) The torsion trap (*tenderbat*) akin to that of Ahaggar. It is used for big game animals, notably for barbary sheep.

(10) Snares (*tazek*, pl. *t'izagin*) made from strips of dum palm leaves are used for guinea fowl and other edible birds. They are generally set near water where birds come to drink. Little boys of the negroid *Imeggedezen* of Agadez also make snares of hair to catch small birds (Fig. 118).

These are the hunting methods known to the Ayr Tuareg, who do not engage much in hunting with the exception of the *Kel Tamgak* mentioned above. Most Ayr Tuareg refuse the small types of game and beasts of prey, and reject not only the *aṛata* lizzard (*Varanus* sp.), but also the smaller lizzard known in Ahaggar as *aggezzeram*, in Ayr as *emekkechchu* (*Uromastix acanthinurus*), though it is claimed that the latter is eaten among Tuareg of the *Kel Ewey* group. The two lizzards do not play any part in Tuareg mythology – the *aṛata* lizzard is greatly detested by the Ayr Tuareg who kill it with stones or sticks, whenever possible. The Ayr Tuareg, including those of noble descent, have no taboos about birds and eggs, and many pastoral Tuareg collect guinea fowl eggs late in summer after the rains. There are a few animals not mentioned above which are considered edible among the Ayr Tuareg, e.g., the tortoise (*afaras*) which is found in the plains south of the Massif. With the exception of the *Kel Ewey* Tuareg the people of Ayr do not collect locusts (*tahwalt* in Ahaggar, *achwal* in Ayr). Locusts are eaten by all people of the two Northern Tuareg groups. The animals are roasted in the ashes or are boiled in a cooking pot to be pounded in the large mortar together with dried dates. This dish is very esteemed by the women who say that it is fattening and in this way adds to their beauty.

Certain weapons have not been mentioned above because they either cannot be considered proper hunting weapons, or because it is doubtful whether they exist among the Tuareg or not.

Traditional Tuareg arms comprise an iron lance (*allaṛ*), a sword (*takuba*), and a dagger (*télek*) carried in a sheath fastened to the left arm. The iron lance may serve as a hunting weapon, and this is true also of the sword. Thus the Ayr Tuareg of the *Kel Ferwan* group said that wild animals were occasionally killed with the sword, and they claimed that two Tuareg of the past had killed lions with this weapon.

The bow (Ahaggar, *taṛayyé* or *taɣaḥḥé*; Ayr, *taganzé*) and arrows (Ahaggar, *imurren*, sing. *amor*, or *tinassabin*, sing. *tanassabt*; Ayr, *imeran*, sing. *amer*) are not traditional Tuareg weapons. Nowadays very ineffective bows and arrows are used as toys by little Tuareg boys, but they are never used by

[text continues on p. 169]